

Return to Islam

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Translation of the Persian explanation of
Shaykh Saleh Sabziwari



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explanation of
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**Lesson eleven
Impediments to Cognition;
Ignorance (1)**

Pages 38 to 41





(I seek refuge to God from the expelled Shaytan

In the name of God, the most merciful and the most beneficent
Praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and peace be upon Moham-
mad and his purified family

Our discussion so far was half of the prefaces of knowing Islam, which was related to the “Cognition Standard”; meaning something which knowing other things is based on that, and we said that according to our master, Mansoor’s statements, that standard is nothing but “Intellect” and it is impossible for it to be something other than intellect; because there is nothing but intellect inside human being to be his cognition tool for the outside world. But the discussion that is being made now is the other half of the prefaces of knowing Islam, which is related to “Impediments to Cognition” and is a very, very important discussion. Of course, all the discussions of this noble book are very, very important, but this one has a special attraction, because it is more objective and practical, and has a more direct contact with the life of each and every one of us and somehow, is the bitter story of our lives and an image of that unpleasant face and animalistic dimension of us; something which exist in us and does not allow us to recognize the right from wrong and wrong from right; the veils of knowledge.

Our master, Mansoor, who diagnoses and roots the illnesses of Muslims in this noble book like a devout, skilled and sympathetic doctor and prescribes the appropriate medications, under title)

Second Preface; Impediments to Cognition

(Says:) **Looking** (meaning finding out and paying attention) **at anything which is plausible to be recognized** (such as material beings and worldly subjects and human beliefs and deeds, not something that is inherently unrecognizable, such as greatness of the creator and the extent of His creation), **when takes place in the light** (meaning with the use) of





intellect requires cognition of that thing (meaning it naturally requires cognition of that thing); **like, looking at anything which is visible** (such as material and visible objects) **and anytime when it is done under the light** (and not in the darkness), **requires a sight from that** (and this is the law of nature. Note that our master, Mansoor analogizes intellect to light and considers it almost with the same rules and conditions, and this is based on God's parables in the Holy Quran, who has introduced Himself as the light of the heavens and the earth, and in various verses, has analogized faith and guidance and Islam and soul to light, and therefore, our master, Mansoor, who is the follower of Quran and is the living and accessible model of holding on to it, analogizes intellect to light). **However**, (in terms of experience and observation) **it happens very often that a person** (due to his natural desire to attract goodness and repel badness) **looks** (meaning he understands) **at something** (from things which can be described as good or bad) **to recognize its goodness or badness** (so that he can attract the good and repel the bad), **but he does not achieve his purpose** (meaning he becomes confused and cannot recognize its goodness or badness) **and sometimes he achieves something opposite to his purpose** (unfortunately, this is often the case), **meaning that he considers the good thing as bad and the bad as good** (and this is a great disaster! Because if he just gets confused and does not recognize goodness or badness of something, he will stop and stopping is better than moving in the opposite direction of the optimum, but if he considers the good as bad and the bad as good, then he will become misguided and miserable and starts moving toward destruction hoping for survival and does exactly what he does not want to do and will end up having the very fate he runs away from!); **such as someone, about whom God has said:** ﴿أَفَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا﴾¹ **“Does the person whose badness of deed was adorned to him, considers it as good?!”** The reason for this **great fiasco** (in the pursuit of purpose) **and frustration** (in recognizing right and wrong), **is the existence of** (mental and spiritual) **factors in human being's soul which prevents him to realize** (correct and complete) **cognition even though he gives it an observation; It is like curtains that** (in the tangible world) **are located before his eyes and prevent**

1 . Al-Fatir/ 8.



him from seeing things (in front of him); as God has said about the unbelievers: ﴿الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَنِ ذِكْرِي وَ كَانُوا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ سَمْعًا﴾¹; “The people whose eyes were covered by the screens from invocation of Me and were not able to hear” and also has said: ﴿وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ﴾²; “And we have set a barrier in front of them and behind them, so we have covered them, therefore they cannot see!” (see how interpretations of our master, Mansoor are consonant with interpretations of holy Quran!) **These inauspicious** (due to the bad ending they have) **and malignant** (due to the possibility of not being released from them) **factors are called “cognition impediments”** (meaning that things which impede the cognition). **Therefore, intellect although** (due to its divine essence and illuminating nature) **requires cognition, but it (only) attains (necessary) cognition when there is not** (a mental and psychological) **impediment in its way and whenever there is an** (mental and psychological) **impediment in its way** (as it sadly is in most people), **it is not able to recognize** (and it becomes an incapable and useless intellect; therefore, we see that a misguided and miserable human, conceives the most ridiculous opinions and the most indecent acts of himself intellectual and it even seems trivial to him! While when a wise and impartial person pays attention to his belief and deed from the outside, will be surprised and sorry that how this man defends such a ridiculous opinion and indecent act?! You see how misguided and miserable people defend the non-God sovereignty, while non-God sovereignty cannot be defended by any justification; or fool and deviant people who defend a liar and prater claimant with such intense feelings and emotions, while his claim is not rationally provable! And when you give them advice, their only response to you is insult, slander, and irrelevant words; for example, they say you are fools who do not understand! Or you are connected to this and that and you have ill will! Or do not have occult vision and experience! I quote a personal example which can be considered as a lesson. I was talking to a young man who was a disciple of one of the false claimants, Ahmed al-Hassan Basri, and I told him: Based on what reasoning you see this man as your Imam and

1 . Al- Kahf/ 101.

2 . Ya-Seen/ 9.





you put him at the same level with God's Caliph and pledge allegiance to him and pour your wealth and life and family toward him and fight with his enemies and become friends with his friends? He replied: because of a narration! I said: this narration, which has become the basis of all your and your friends' beliefs and deeds, is a single narration¹ on one hand and its narrators are unknown, and yet it hardly ever leads to conjecture and on the other hand, it is not consistently applicable to this man and is not certainly related to him and with this description, your beliefs and deeds are based on conjecture over conjecture, while conjecture over conjecture, is darkness over darkness; because conjecture is not proof in Islam! What answer do you think he gave me?! He said: This narrative and its relation to this man is definite, because I have dreamed! I said: So this is worse; because you added the third conjecture to your previous two conjectures, and now it became darkness over darkness over darkness! Given that dream interpretation is not definitive and is conjectural, unless it is done by a sinless person; such as the dream that Abraham saw and interpreted himself, and the dream that Joseph saw, and was interpreted by Jacob, and the dream that the Prophet saw and was interpreted by God, not a dream that Shamsi saw and Soghra interpreted!! I saw that he became silent and was not saying anything! I said: Now, how do you want to invite people to your belief and deed?! With your dream?! What answer do you think he gave me?! He said: this is their own problem! People also have a duty to dream!! I realized that this young man is a fool and does not understand what he says; so I did not say anything else and just prayed for him! I quoted this as an example so that you would see what impediments to cognition do to human and how they throw him to the deepest levels of misguidance and misery. This is why our master, Mansoor in this part of this noble book, recognizes the impediments to cognition the most important reason for misguidance and misery of Muslims and warns of each of them in detail and says:). **As described above, (theoretical) recognition the impediments of cognition (in detail) and removing them (in practice), is an introductory step for cognition (meaning its prerequisite) and accordingly is necessary (meaning because cognition is necessary, introductory step for cognition**

1 . [Translator note: Wahid Hadith - Solitary and non-certain narration]

is also necessary; as the people of principals have said: “The introduction of obligatory is obligatory”.

Following this brief preparative overview, our master, Mansoor describes and explains the most important impediments to cognition in detail and names seven major impediments which, in his delicate Qur’anic interpretation, are the “Seven gates of the hell”, and says:).

Most important impediments of cognition (given that there are also other secondary impediments under these ones), **are as follows**¹:

1 . Ignorance

Ignorance which means lack of knowledge (or foolishness, unawareness and illiteracy), **is the most important impediment, rather it is the origin** (meaning the source) **of all impediments of cognition; since its relation with cognition, is like relation of something with its opposite** (or so-called contradiction), **and there is no impediment** (to cognition) **unless it has risen** (in some way) **from it; as God has said: كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ** **﴿اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾**² **“Thus God sealed the intellect of those who have no knowledge!”** (Considering that the word “Qulub”³ in Quran is not this cluster-shaped organ inside the chest, but it is the very intellect which is the source of human perceptions and with this description, God sealing on hearts of ignorant people, means the total deprivation of the cognition ability in their intellect due to ignorance. It is understood from this explanation that the elimination of ignorance is necessary and this is what our master, Mansoor, mentions under the title of)

[Necessity of knowledge of concepts (meaning generalities) **and their instances** (meaning objective subjects)]

(and says:) **It is clear that in order to recognize an unknown thing** (and turn it into known), **intellect** (as the identification power) **needs some information** (related to it), **so that by** (mentally) **combining them**

1 . The cognition impediments can be possibly known as seven things; since they are Hell’s gates and God has said: **﴿لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ لِكُلِّ بَابٍ مِنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَقْسُومٌ﴾** (Al-Hijr/ 44); **“There are seven gates for the Hell, which for every gate, a group of people are divided”!**

2 . Ar-Rum/ 59.

3 . قلوب .



together, may attain the cognition of that unknown; as in order to recognize that something is true (such as a belief or deed), intellect needs to recognize the truth (in general and conceptually) on one hand and recognize that thing (partially and fact-oriented) on the other hand (meaning it firstly needs to be known what is the truth and what characteristics it has in its essence, and secondly it needs to be known what is this external matter and what characteristics it has in its essence), so that by adjusting (meaning comparing) these two with each other, intellect may recognize whether that thing is true or not (in this way that if the characteristics of this external matter were equal to the characteristics of the truth, then it is true and if the characteristics of this external matter were different from the characteristics of the truth, then it is not. This is why they say: «إعرف الحق تعرف أهله» ; “Know the truth to know its people” and say: «لا يعرف الحق بالرجال و لكنّ الرجال يعرفون بالحق» ; “The truth is not known by persons, but persons are known by the truth”; meaning cognition of concept precedes cognition of instance, although cognition of instance is also necessary with the basis of concept). So it can be understood that knowing the concept of something (like general characteristics of a theist and a polytheist or Muslim and infidel or believer and sinner and so on), is not sufficient for recognizing it (given that such recognition is totally abstract and general and does not provide the needs of human being in life) and knowing the (external) instance for that, is also necessary (he says this so that if later on he introduces external instances under general definition of each impediment to cognition, no one would complain and would not say what was the need to mention external instances; because generalization is not sufficient and we should talk details by using actual instances). While knowing its instance is more difficult than knowing itself; since its instance (unlike the concept) is outside of human being’s existence (meaning in real world), and recognizing something outside of human being’s existence (in the street and university and school and the world of culture and politics), is more difficult than recognizing something which is inside of human being (and his mind); so as for instance recognizing the right and wrong concerning their concepts, is not difficult and may be achieved by the endeavor of mind (such as recognizing justice and injustice or truth

and lie conceptually and generally), **but their recognition in terms of instance** (like who is just and who is unjust or who is right and who lies), **is difficult and may not be achieved except by the endeavor of body limbs** (meaning by using eyes and ears and tongue and hand and leg to question and review) **and therefore, people disagree on instance of something about which they have no disagreement in its concept** (just as they all say that liar is the enemy of God, but they all lie! Or they all agree that deviation from Islam is bad, but each of them accuses the others of it!). **With the above description, lack of necessary information for recognizing something, whether in terms of concept or in terms of instance, prevents the cognition of that thing and acquiring the necessary information to recognize it, whether in terms of concept or in terms of instance, is necessary.** (In order to learn the necessary knowledges conceptually, one has to read and study and use the first-hand sources of Islam and to study necessary knowledges in a fact-oriented way, he must open his eyes and ears and see different thinkers and hear their thoughts and by using the necessary conceptual knowledge, compare them with one another. This is why misguided and miserable people of the world are two groups: one Illiterates and the other one is Unawares. For this reason, it is considered obligatory to acquire conceptual and fact-oriented knowledge in Islam, and this is what our master, Mansoor takes into consideration and under the title of)

[Incubency of seeking knowledge]

(says:) **This is what has been called “seeking knowledge” in Islam** (meaning in reliable Mutawatir narrations of the Prophet and his caliphs) **and is regarded as** (objectively, not sufficiently) **obligatory upon every Muslim** (our master, Mansoor, does not leave any claims in his book without reasoning, even if that claim is obvious and acceptable. And to prove his claim, he points to a famous and Mutawatir narration and says: “As an example see: «طَلَبَ الْعِلْمَ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ» Narration [Seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim”] in Sunan Ibn Majah, vol. 1, page 81; Wakee’ ibn Jarrah version, page 98; Musnad Abi Ya’la, vol. 5, page 223, Ibn Salamah, Musnad al-Shahab, vol. 1 page 135; Musnad Abi Hanifa, page 24; Bayhaqi, Shu’ab Al-Iman, vol. 2, page 254; Tabarani,



Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat, vol. 2, page 297 and vol. 4, page 245; ibid, Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir, vol. 10, page 195; and for awareness about its fame among Muslims, see: Hakim Nishapuri, Ma'arifat 'ulum Al-hadith, page 92; Ibn Abd Al-Birr, Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi, vol. 1, page 7; and for awareness about its Tawatur, see: Katani, Nazm al-Mutanathir min al-Hadith al-Mutawatir, page 35. It is understood from this explanation that our master, Mansoor, is completely fluent in the old and new hadiths of Muslims on one hand, and on the other hand, it is not like he does not pay attention to hadith, but he is attentive and committed to cite and testify a Mutawatir hadith, although he does not use single hadiths so that his claim, due to conjectural nature of single hadith, would not downgrade from the mountaintop of certainty down to hillside of conjecture and this is the method which not only flows all over this book, but also all over the life of this great man and this is why the most strict Muslims who are so tough in their beliefs and deeds and do not simply accept any belief and deed, follow this character; because they find their purpose with him and see all his doctrines and thoughts as certain. As an example, please pay attention to this very point that this great scholar, proves the obligation of seeking knowledge upon every Muslim by using intellectual reasons and due to being so careful and strict, brings a Mutawatir hadith in the footnotes only as a religious witness and when he wants to transfer to religious proof situation, he refers to certainties of the book of God and says:),¹ **to the extent that God has said:** ﴿وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا﴾;² **“And say, Oh my Lord! Increase my knowledge!”**. (This noble verse is in singular form of command to seek knowledge from God, implies the necessity of knowledge on any Muslim, and it is clear that God gives knowledge to

1 . As an example see: «طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ» Narration [Seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim] in Sunan Ibn Majah, vol. 1, page 81; Wakee' ibn Jarrah version, page 98; Musnad Abi Ya'la, vol. 5, page 223, Ibn Salamah, Musnad al-Shahab, vol. 1 page 135; Musnad Abi Hanifa, page 24; Bayhaqi, Shu'ab Al-Iman, vol. 2, page 254; Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat, vol. 2, page 297 and vol. 4, page 245; ibid, Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir, vol. 10, page 195; and for awareness about its fame among Muslims, see: Hakim Nishapuri, Ma'arifat 'ulum Al-hadith, page 92; Ibn Abd Al-Birr, Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi, vol. 1, page 7; and for awareness about its Tawatur, see: Katani, Nazm al-Mutanathir min al-Hadith al-Mutawatir, page 35.

2 . Taha/ 114.



Muslims through intellectual and religious means and with this description, gaining knowledge through those intellectual and religious ways and means is obligatory on every Muslim.) **Yet** (with regards to intellectual clarity of obligation of seeking knowledge on every Muslim and the existence of verses and Mutawatir narrations like the one mentioned above), **it is surprising that many of Muslims** (like followers of religious and jurisprudential doctrines) **have doubt in its incumbency** (in an objective way), **even most of them** (given that most of them are imitators), **do not regard it as obligatory; since in their opinion, gaining knowledge** (at least the knowledge of Islamic laws) **is obligatory for a group of them** (in a sufficient¹ way) **and with their action** (under the title of scholars, Mufties² and Marja³), **others will be waived from it and it would be sufficient for others to imitate them. While seeking knowledge** (of whole Islam, including its beliefs and rules), **is obligatory** (meaning certain knowledge of Islamic beliefs and rules is necessary for every Muslim and conjecture is not sufficient for any Muslim and with this description, the study of certain knowledge of Islamic beliefs and rules is obligatory upon any Muslim) **and following incumbency of knowledge and imitating others, will not cause** (certain) **knowledge** (because concordance between fatwas from scholars, Mufties and Marjas with Islamic beliefs and rules is not certain); **whether it is imitating the predecessors or those living at present** (because in this regard, there is no difference between the dead and the living; in contrast to the illusion of a group of Muslims who believe imitating the dead is Haram, but imitating the living is permissible, and the illusion of another group which, on the contrary, do not believe imitating the living is sufficient, and believe imitating previous scholars is obligatory). **Therefore, those who are the imitators** (like the majority of Muslims), **are not regarded the scholars** (because imitation is not knowledge and does not lead to knowledge) **and this is the fact on which there is no disagreement** (meaning all Muslims believe that imitator is considered an uneducated person and is not considered a scholar). **As described above, most of**

1 . [Translator note: In the sense that when a certain number of people do it, will be sufficient for the rest of people.]

2 . [Translator note: an Islamic scholar who explains and expounds Islamic law]

3 . [Translator note: A religious scholar as reference]





Muslims are ignorant; As God has said: ﴿وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ﴾¹; **“But most of them are ignorant”**; (note that such a verse, unlike the illusion of some people, is not limited to “polytheists”, but the pronoun «هم» meaning “they” applies to “the people”; as it is mentioned in other verses as «النَّاسِ», this means that most people in every era are illiterate in comparison to the scholars of that era and illiterates of each era are the majority. Therefore, adducing to such verses by our master, Mansoor, contrary to the illusion of some ignorant people, is not adducing to verses related to polytheists to prove a claim about Muslims; but is adducing to the verses related to the people, which also includes Muslims with their publicity; as it is, in fact, also visible and tangible.) **since their cognitions** (meaning majority of Muslims) **are imitative, rather a group of them that** (under the title of scholars throughout recent decades and centuries) **have acted out for gaining knowledge, are not yet** (in reality not credibility) **considered as knowledgeable** (meaning scholars) **either; Because they have gained knowledge based on imitating the predecessors** (such as jurisprudences of fiqh and hadith from the second and third and fourth and fifth centuries and are strongly influenced by their jurisprudential and hadithic religions), **while knowledge is not gained based on imitation; concerning the fact that knowledge is certainty, and imitation is conjecture and certainty will not be gained through conjecture** (meaning certain result does not come from conjectural prefaces, but comes from certain prefaces); **As God has said:** ﴿وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا﴾²; **“They do not have any knowledge about that; They do not follow anything but conjecture, while conjecture will not make anything needless from the truth!”** (Therefore, God considers conjecture from foreign knowledges and insufficient for truth cognition) **In this way, most of the** (current) **Muslims who imitate these people** (meaning scholar-like imitators), **are actually imitating some people who themselves are imitating others and this is nothing except gaining conjecture** (to beliefs and rules of Islam) **in a conjectural way** (meaning conjecture of scholar-like imitators to concordance of their predecessors fatwas with beliefs and rules of Islam), **about which God**

1 . Al-An'am/ 111.

2 . An-Najm/ 28.

has said: ﴿ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ﴾;¹ **“Obscurities, some of which are above others!”** (as an explanation, there are two conjectures accumulated here: one is the conjecture of imitators to the rightness of fatwas of scholar-like imitators and the other one is the conjecture of scholar-like imitators to the rightness of fatwas of their predecessors whom they follow and this double layer conjecture is a darkness upon darkness; Because conjecture, due to its lack of authority in Islam, is considered darkness and certainty is what which is considered light

wa salamualaikum wa rahmatullah)

1 . An-Nur/ 40.